## SENATE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

LANSING, MICHIGAN

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## **Senate Democratic Caucus Announces Jobs and Economic Security Task Force**

Research ranks jobs and the economy as top concern in Mich. for 2003

**LANSING** – The Senate Democratic Caucus announces the formation of its Jobs and Economic Security Task Force. Co-chaired by Senators Ray Basham (D-Taylor) and Mark Schauer (D-Battle Creek), the task force will hold hearings with local business groups, labor coalitions, economic development professionals, and worker training organizations to identify best practices and determine strategies for retaining and growing good-paying jobs in Michigan.

"Michigan businesses face a variety of economic challenges that continuously threaten the many good jobs they provide. Clearly it is in all of our interest to help these businesses remain competitive and viable," Sen. Basham said. "As Legislators, we should employ state government as a helpful partner with business and labor, creating a business climate that encourages economic growth and jobs that support Michigan families."

According to a recent study conduced by MSU's Institute for Public Policy and Social Research, the level of concern about the economy and jobs has nearly doubled since last year. Forty-one percent of Michigan residents believe that the economy and jobs are the most important issues for state government to work on improving, compared to 23 percent in 2002.

Since 2000, Michigan's unemployment rate has more than doubled from a low of 182,848 (3.5 percent) unemployed workers to 378,000 (7.4 percent) in July 2003. Last month U.S. job cut announcements reached their highest levels in three months, ushering in the longest job-market slump since World War II.

Sen. Mark Schauer said, "Michigan is constantly under siege from other states and other countries trying to lure away our businesses and our skilled work force. Whether we are facing good or bad economic times, we cannot rest because the business cycle is constantly in flux. Our state has some cutting-edge economic development initiatives and we need to make sure that these initiatives have the resources necessary to achieve both long- and short-term gains."

The goal of the task force is to solicit public testimony that will foster future policy recommendations and legislation to help protect and grow jobs and enhance Michigan's economic security.

Other members of the Senate Democratic Caucus Jobs and Economic Security Task Force include Sen. Deb Cherry (D-Burton) and Sen. Mike Prusi (D-Ishpeming).

The task force's first hearing is scheduled for 5:30-7:30 p.m., Thursday, August 21 at the Discovery Theatre located at 51 West Michigan Ave. in Downtown Battle Creek. Other hearings are currently scheduled in Flint and Monroe.

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